1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.191-A]

function, any more than has the whole ritual of initiation. *Toré*, according to Costermans, is, if anything, a spirit cult. The *toré* are spirits of the dead, known under different names such as *toré bo ichu*, *toré bo iko*, *toré ba iza*, and are clearly differentiated from the godhead. Sacrifice to Toré may take two forms, writes Costermans, *toré lusi* and *toré luba* (*lusi*, invoke; *luba*, throw, offer), and is practiced more by Lese villagers than by the archers, who practice it only rarely, for the hunt. Costermans, far from denying that the Mbuti possess a notion of God, affirms that they do, as do the villagers, but insists that it is dissociated from the *toré* cult described by Schebesta.

Death and Afterlife

The Pygmy notion of soul appears complex and confused to Schebesta (1950, 90; 1952, 332). He attributes the confusion to heavy borrowing from the villagers, the Mbuti originally having little interest in life after death. There is a distinction between body, shade, and soul, respectively, *ela* (or *eda*), *tedi*, and *boru e'i* (or *borupi* in Efe). The Lese villagers make the same distinction. Breath, *ekeu*, is a vital force, extinguished at death. The Mbuti believe that shades become *befe*, or forest sprites, and the villagers claim that they become *lodi* or *keti*, phantoms.

[ARCHERS]

775 The soul, the word for which designates the
26 pulse, appears to return to God (Toré) in the
[774] sky, where it becomes a star. The other vital force mentioned, *megbe*, changes into the totem after death. Death is inevitable, the will of God calling back the *boru e'i*.

774 Dreams are events that actually befall the
828 soul during sleep, according to the archers. While the body sleeps, the *boru e'i* leave it and wander at will. In this way God and the dead can manifest themselves during sleep.

775 The northern archers think of a realm for the
[777] souls of the dead, situated in ravines and caves, and of a lord of this realm of the dead. Both the dead and their god are, like the God of the Undergrowth, termed "Toré"; but Schebesta attributes this to a confusion of properly Pygmy notions (the cult of *toré* as described by him) and adopted villager notions (i.e., the cult
[769] of the dead). Schebesta holds that the true Mbuti have no cult of the dead. On death one of the vital principles takes the form of a star, living with the celestial divinity, remote from the Mbuti world.

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[ARCHERS]

[P. 191-C]

the Mbuti world. The other principle becomes one of the forest sprites, the *befe*, living with the earthly divinity, Toré, and assisting him in his lordship of the forest. Far from representing the dead, these sprites are regarded as knaves, to be fought with as such. In legends they are concerned principally with the hunt and frequently try to trick the Pygmy out of his prey to which, as *befe*, they have a right themselves. If they represented the souls of the dead, suggests Schebesta, the Mbuti would hardly be able to take the attitude toward them that they do.

Death may also be regarded by the Pygmy as a punishment visited on man for one of three sins. God forbade his children to look at him, but one of his daughters was overcome by curiosity, and death resulted. (This legend is actually found more frequently among the net hunters than the archers.) God forbade his children to follow him on a certain path, but they became impatient and followed, and death resulted. God (Muri-muri) left fire in the care of his mother, Matu; but a Pygmy stole it from her and she died from cold, so Muri-muri condemned all men to die. This curiosity, impatience, and greed are severally cited as causes of death.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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613 larly a child, who is said always to respect his
614 patrilineal totem, respects his mother's totem
[608] when living with her group. A man also ob-
serves the totemic restrictions of his *karé-*
[784] brother. The totem is always taboo for the
[262] Mbuti. One may never eat it, and often not kill
it, touch it, or even eat the food normally eaten
[753] by the totemic species. Breach of taboo is be-
[761] lieved to involve serious illness or death.

The relationship of the Mbuti to their totem is one not of fear but rather of respect, which Schebesta says is evidenced by their addressing it as "father" or "grandfather," and by the belief that the totem animal gave birth to the first member of the lineal group observing that totem.

[775] To this belief that the clan ancestor descended from the totem is allied the belief that on death the Mbuti is transformed into his totem. Schebesta finds it difficult to reconcile this with his analysis of Mbuti religion, and to see just which vital principle it is that becomes the totem. Connected with this difficulty is the
[761] all-important belief in *megbe*, the vital force
[778] emanating from the totem and immanent, but in different degrees, in all human beings.

Schebesta cites no individual or sex totems. As he sees it, totemism follows strictly lineage lines.

Magic

761 Schebesta finds the link between the religious
778 [p 192-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.237-A]

776 God and lord of the *ba-keti*, the dead. Schebesta (1950, 23) says that among the "Sua" he was not able to discover any association of the rainbow, lightning, thunder, or death, with the benevolent "*Jägergottheit*" (Kalisia).

The Putnam material does not attempt to interpret the Mbuti notion of a chthonic God. Among the Epulu net hunters, Kalisia is apparently unknown to the Mbuti, who use the term Mungu both among themselves and when talking with villagers. This God is benevolent, though in some mysterious way that does not detract from his benevolence he is associated with death.

776 Disaster, ill fortune, and lack of success in
• 775 the chase are usually attributed to *satani* (also *sitani*, *shaitani*), forest sprites akin to the archer *befe* (Schebesta gives the Sua word as *beki*). It seems that Mbuti may become *satani* when they die, but it is not clear by any means that all *satani* were once Mbuti. They are never [761] referred to as though they had been Mbuti, though at death the word *satani* is sometimes used in connection with a vital force leaving

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

the body (p. 238). There is also some confusion among the net-hunter Mbuti between the terms *mungu* and *satani*, which at times appear to be interchangeable. Schebesta (1948, 493) says that the local Bira refer to these forest sprites as "*molimo*," the name they also give to their secret association of men.

As with the archers, abnormal conditions of the physical world denote the presence of the chthonic God. At such times the net hunters are careful not to expose themselves to his sight, which would bring death, nor to attract his attention by unseemly behavior. He is a benevolent God but one best kept at a distance. There is no evidence of any connection between God and the lineage through the elder, but each hunting band seems to regard Mungu, while God of all Mbuti everywhere, as being particularly concerned with them.[1]

Cult Practices

In so far as ritual is a response to uncertainty or crisis, the net hunters have far less need of it than many other peoples. As we show above, their forest environment provides them with

[1] In view of the extremely loose usage of the term *mungu*, I interpret net-hunter expressed attitudes as indicating a belief in a local deity, not necessarily named Mungu, somehow related to the over-all God.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

The dividing line between magic and religion, according to Putnam, is even more difficult to draw with the Mbuti than with other people. His notes, however, do not attempt any analysis. The only other available information on cult practices is a few isolated descriptions in Mrs. Putnam's notes. These, except for the description of burial, are given in the section on Magic (p. 239).

Death and Afterlife

There is hardly any information on the notions of the net hunters on life after death, except that they firmly believe that life continues in some form or another, in much the same way that it is lived by the living. There is some indication, both from Mbuti informants and from the legends collected by Mrs. Putnam in the Epulu District, that the net hunters believe that when a body dies, a vital part of it, the personality or soul, leaves. It may become either a forest sprite (*satani*), or it may go to some other place where it will have nothing further to do with the living. In either case it will live much as it lived before—hunting and gathering, dancing and singing. *Satani*, however, can die, whereas there is no death in the more remote spirit world.

The net hunters believe that death is caused by the water animal that is the rainbow that is, sometimes, the python. It is not clear whether

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2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

to village boys. In some cases the Mbuti's *kpara* may choose him as *karé* to his own son, and in other cases he may see some advantage in having his Mbuti form a *karé* pact with another villager, as this forms an economic and political link, then, between the two villagers. It seems that, generally, *karé* brotherhood is formed between Mbuti and their *kpara's* patrikin, however. It is believed that this places the two in an indissoluble politico-economic relationship for the rest of their lives, a relationship of subordination as far as the Mbuti is concerned, and one that will persist into the afterlife of the same individuals.

The villager concepts of afterlife are not clearly defined, but it is accepted without question that individuals continue to exist after death and may, if qualified by initiation and by adherence throughout life to the tribal code of behavior, join the ancestors, who live together much as they did in the present world, and continue to concern themselves with the present world. It is also accepted without question that there must be Mbuti in the afterworld, just as there are in the present. If one asks why must there be Mbuti, the invariable answer is in terms of the economic dependence of the villagers upon the Mbuti in the present world, the assumption being that the same needs will exist in the afterworld. But the economic relationship is the most easily expressed and recognized, however mistakenly, and is not necessarily therefore the most important. The political relationship is also recognized, though not quite so easily expressed because of the greater incompatibility of the systems of the two peoples. But there is also a ritual relationship which is certainly as powerful as the others, if not more so, and it is just as much a part of the *karé* pact as are the economic and political aspects.

Karé partners are expected to trade with each other, though not necessarily exclusively. This allows for the formation of *karé* brotherhood between individuals who are not in a *kpara*/Mbuti relationship, and is an attempt on the part of the villager to regularize the situation should his Mbuti join a band trading with a neighboring village. To have a *kpara* in one village and a *karé* in another, strategically chosen, is considered equally advantageous by Mbuti and villager. As far as the Mbuti is concerned it provides him with two groups of people who feel under some kind of an obligation toward him, and who need him. As far as the *kpara* is concerned it gives him someone he can effectively claim against should his Mbuti decide to trade in that direction. As far as the villager *karé* is concerned it is another Mbuti

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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having been there they do not know what it is like, and not knowing what it is like they cannot predict what their behavior will be. They say that to try and go into the future is to "walk blindly," and their response to villagers, missionaries or any who claim a knowledge of afterlife is to say, "How do you know. Have you died and been there?" They liken such discussion to the talk of a hunter who suggests hunting in a certain place without ever having been there, or a woman who goes off in a set direction to gather a certain kind of mushroom without having seen them growing in any particular place there. These are people who act "emptily," or whose heads are loose and not properly attached to the body.

However, this disclaimer to absolute knowledge of the nature of the future or of afterlife is in itself a characteristic that I found to be universal among the Mbuti, at least within my own experience. This did not prevent individuals from having ideas about the unknown, but as already indicated, such speculation was considered as fruitless, and took the form of legend and was listened to with interest, and often with amusement. Such speculations, whether spontaneous or in the form of established legends, do not reveal any consistency in detail, which appears to be a matter of individual imagination, but there are broad areas of belief that seem widespread among both archers and net-hunters.

There is a belief in a power greater than the Mbuti themselves and not of the natural order of the world they see and know around them. Insofar as this is stated to be a belief, and not knowledge, it may be considered a spiritual power, the spirit being a level of existence that the Mbuti do not claim to understand but which they see as necessarily existing in order to explain the nature of the world's unknowns. Again the terminology is hopelessly confused, the Epulu Mbuti using, in one instance, no less than five terms interchangeably—*pepo, keti, boru, roho, satani.* These terms are drawn from Lesé, Bira, Ndaka and Ngwana, among which tribes of villagers they are also to some extent interchanged, each change bringing a different shade of meaning. For the Mbuti they do not indicate clearly differentiated elements that make up the physical and spiritual being of man, but rather indicate this basic belief that man himself is in part spiritual and that his life derives not from the flesh but from some other source. All five terms are used equally to denote this personal force. But each one is also used to denote different aspects of that force, and the Mbuti usage again in no way coincides with that of the villagers,